

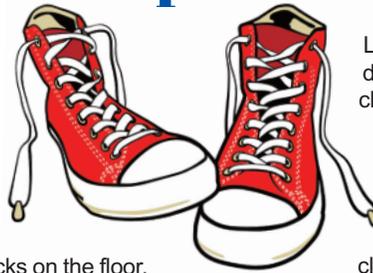
The State of the Heart

Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach ✦ Spring/Summer 2019

Shoes Make the News At April 6 Sneaker Ball

As they do every year, visitors to the annual Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach spring gala—Saturday, April 6, from 6 to 10 p.m. in the Harro East Ballroom—will enjoy great food, fun conversation and fellowship with many of the men and women we serve. Terrific prizes will be auctioned to raise funds that support the ministry, and D.J. Chuck Argenito will get the dance party moving.

This year, however, high heels and dress shoes need not apply. It's a sneaker ball! So ditch your regular dance shoes and wear your kicks on the floor.



Lace up those Chuck Taylor high tops, dig your original Air Jordans out of the closet, or show off your favorite new running shoes. Make a rubber-soled fashion statement in bright colors or shoes that glow in the dark. Your feet will thank you, and it's all to benefit Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach. Please click on the link below to order tickets!

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Get Your Kicks On!

SCPO Sneaker Ball gala
Saturday, April 6th, 2019
6 - 10 pm

at Harro East Ballroom
155 N. Chestnut Street

See article on this page, and visit:
www.spirituschristiprisonoutreach.org
for event details or to purchase tickets.

A Year of Growth, Progress

By Chip Partner

At Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach, there were reasons to think 2018 would be the equivalent of what sports teams call a “re-building year.”

The longtime Directors of Jennifer House and Nielsen House left their roles, so both houses were transitioning to new leadership as the year began. Changes in overnight staffing requirements promised to increase operating costs. The shifting focus of government funders on moving residents to permanent housing, quickly, presented a new challenge.

With all of these factors converging at once, it would be natural to view the year as a time for taking stock and holding steady. Instead, 2018 proved to be a year of growth and progress. As Executive Director Jim Smith describes it, “It is clear that something wonderful is happening to this precious ministry.”



Nielsen House men having fun at Altitude Trampoline Park.

Under new leadership teams—Director Sarah Lee and House Manager Ki’Atta Whipset at Jennifer House, Director Jon Olsen and House Manager Robert Lee at Nielsen House—both houses are busier than ever. The overnight staffing change was transformed into a positive, freeing up space to serve more residents—a total of 52 women who lived at Jennifer House during 2018, and 52 men at Nielsen House.

continued on page 3



Exciting Growth in Supportive Housing

Executive Director's Update

By Jim Smith

On February 6th, I had the opportunity to tour the construction site of *Charlotte Square on the Loop* with Jenifer Higgins, the development manager; representatives from New York State; and the Home Leasing construction team.

As we walked through the four-story building, with the walls framed and unfinished, I was taken back to a time 40 years ago. That was when I walked through the Corpus Christi Center construction site, and saw the space where three apartments would be built on the second floor. Back then, during that walk-through, is where I heard the call to move out of my family home in Webster and into one of those three apartments. I was called to leave my job at Kodak and give myself more fully to the ministries of Corpus Christi Church. That was a pivotal moment in my life. Those framed walls were finished in the next few months and became my first apartment, home, and sanctuary. It was through this decision that I could be available for the birth and development of Rogers House, the origin of what Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach is today.

As I walked through the halls of *Charlotte Square on the Loop*, I again heard a call that change is upon us, for myself and for Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach. It is clear that something wonderful is happening to this precious ministry.



We have been graciously invited by Home Leasing to partner in this very exciting housing project, in the highly desirable East End neighborhood between Main Street and East Ave. This development will consist of 50 apartments, scheduled for completion this August. Eight of the apartments will be reserved for alumni of Jennifer House and Nielsen House. During the tour, I was shown the frame of my new office, where I will be able to offer case management and project coordination for the residents of the eight units designated for Spiritus Christi residents. This is an exciting time for the Prison Outreach, and I am so pleased to be a part of this project.

The investment that Home Leasing and New York State are making in the men and women of the prison outreach is a gift. Our residents are being provided a level of extravagance beyond our wildest dreams. Everything about this housing opportunity will say to the men and women we serve, "We believe in you. We love you. Make our community your home and live your best life."

This project is made possible by New York State's investment in Spiritus Christi and Home Leasing through the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI). This year, the State is committed to the development and operation of at least 1,200 new units of supportive housing for persons identified as homeless with special needs, conditions or other life challenges. This is part of a commitment by Governor Cuomo to develop 6,000 units over five years. New York will provide operating funds to support the needs of individuals residing in the units, which includes our eight apartments at *Charlotte Square on the Loop*.

Spiritus Christi and Home Leasing received a second conditional ESSHI award for 20 more apartments with support services at another



housing project, on the west side of the city, that will open in early 2020. In addition, we have been able to secure 10 apartments through our HUD Rapid Rehousing Program. If things go as expected, counting our current apartments at the Voters Block and Fredrick Douglass communities on Main Street, we should have a total of 62 apartments available to men and women of the Prison Outreach by the end of 2021.

All 62 of these units will provide our men, women and their children access to quality housing that is affordable, with ongoing support, case management and rental assistance from Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach. That means they will have a safety net. If they lose a job or can't pay their heat bill, we can help. If they struggle with relapse or just need someone to talk to, we will be there.

Quality, safe, affordable housing is a key to the success of our residents as they transition into the community. We are so grateful to our partners at Home Leasing, New York State, and HUD for believing and investing in our people. Of course, none of this would be possible without the incredible generosity and support of the Spiritus Christi community.



Happy Holidays and High Hopes

Jennifer House News

By Sarah Lee, Director

The month of October is always fun at Jennifer House. This is a time we bring goblins and other spooky creatures to life. The women had a blast decorating the house with cobwebs and pumpkins. The women and their children were really creeped out on the haunted hayride, but the giggles were endless.

After the smiles of October, it was no surprise to enter November with more joy. With our house full, the women participated in a day of thanks with Nielsen House, enjoying pizza and wings. On Thanksgiving Day, they cooked a delicious meal and were able to celebrate all the things they are thankful for. Themes of gratitude they shared included having a home, their children, a warm bed, and support from friends and family.

Jennifer House was able to close out 2018 with many blessings. For Christmas we were able to serve 12 women, 6 alumni, many children and grandchildren all with Christmas presents. We were overflowing with joy.

December was also a very giving month for the house itself, as our wonderful partners, The Rochester Women's Giving Circle and Raymour & Flanigan blessed us with a beautiful new dining room. This included new furniture and a set of new tables for the



living room that has brighten up the whole downstairs!

We look forward to the 2019 year with high hopes and expectations for greatness. We want to have more fun, serve more women, and experience more meaningful time together. **We look forward to the "Sneaker Ball" gala on April 6 and hope to see you all there!**



"An attitude of gratitude."

A Year of Growth, Progress continued...

Both leadership teams have expanded the number of opportunities for residents to have "sober fun"—from summer picnics to trampoline parks to whitewater rafting and sports events. As Jim Smith explained in our last newsletter, the leaders have collaborated to make many of these coed activities, where men and women from both houses celebrate together and work on building healthy relationships.

Thanks to the support of private donors, both houses have been undergoing physical improvements that make them more comfortable and supportive places for our residents to call home. Highlights include a new roof, a much-needed second bathroom and new furniture in the living spaces at Jennifer House, plus a new exercise room at Nielsen House that you'll read more about in this issue, with kitchen renovations on tap for later this year.

SCPO's jail and prison visitation programs continued to journey with men and women who are incarcerated. In 2018 a total of nine volunteers in five groups supported 325 men and women incarcerated at the 5 Points Correctional Facility, Groveland Correctional Facility, Monroe County Correctional Facility and Jail, and Orleans Correctional Facility. SCPO leaders met frequently with local law enforcement officials and judges during the year, to promote our houses as a resource to help people avoid incarceration through Drug Court or Human Trafficking Court programs.

Additionally, partners at Home Leasing, along with the state and federal government, are investing in supportive housing for residents who transition out of Jennifer House and Nielsen House—a total of 62 units of quality housing with supportive services scheduled to be available by 2021.

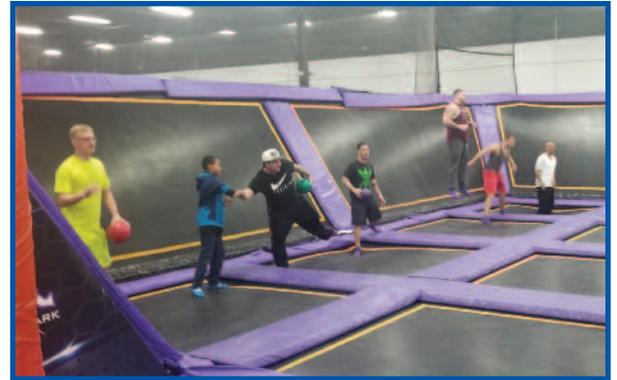
Instead of just holding steady, 2018 proved to be a year of great progress for Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach. We begin 2019 with a future full of hope and promise for the men and women we serve, and deep gratitude for the staff members, volunteers and donors who make this work possible.



Fun, Fitness, and a Bright Future

Nielsen House News

By Jon Olsen, Director



Enjoying more sober fun at Altitude Trampoline Park.

As summer faded and the leaves began to fall, Nielsen House geared up for a joyous and heartwarming holiday season. In addition to spending precious time with friends and family, residents were able to live life to the fullest through a multitude of exciting events.

Overall, Nielsen House faithfully served 52 men last year, which is quite a record for our program. As all of us grow from their experiences, we hope to continue serving our beloved community and giving back to those who have helped us along the way.

October brought screams and thrills at Darien Lake's Fright Fest, where our men had the opportunity to provide their families a fun-filled day of haunted houses, games and adrenaline-pumping amusement rides. To cap off the experience, we held a wonderful picnic that allowed our men and their families to reflect on the day's experiences.

Next, residents had the opportunity to reach for the skies at Altitude Trampoline Park in Henrietta. Teamwork and camaraderie were themes of the day, as our men catapulted each other to new heights and had some good old-fashioned fun, all while being sober! Ice skating, movies and bowling were other fun-filled, group-based activities that helped to foster a sense of brotherhood and support.

Thanksgiving was a success for our residents and their families alike. Nielsen House hosted nearly 20 people, largely family and friends, for a delicious feast prepared by our men. Everyone took pride in the meal they prepared, as the day filled with love, laughter, and some tears. Families marveled at the changes their loved ones are going through, and had already made, fostering a new sense of hope and drive among our men.

December brought snow and ice along with happiness and gratitude during a joyful Christmas holiday. Gift giving can often be a source of stress for our men, who

work tirelessly on self-improvement and recovery. Through the generous support of our donors and Spiritus Christi, however, our men and their families were able to celebrate the season with gifts for all. These humbling and mind-easing donations were received with many thanks, and created true holiday cheer.

Wellness has been an important focus of our home. Through generous support from Greater Rochester Health Foundation, the YCMA and ROCoverly Fitness, Christopher Ruiz spearheaded major renovations to our basement gym, including the acquisition of a new, state-of-the-art treadmill. As our own fitness liaison and success story, Chris personifies the importance of fitness in recovery. (See his story on page 5.)

Our men have participated in two 5K fundraising runs, as well as hikes with ROCoverly Fitness, which provide a new sense of teamwork, courage and accomplishment. We have also partnered with Trillium Health to provide on-site testing for Hepatitis C and HIV, along with a multitude of informational sessions. Wellness will certainly remain an important pillar of success for our men, throughout the entirety of their recovery.

We are also excited for home improvements at Nielsen House. Our men are grateful to have a ramp for handicapped accessibility, which was recently completed, as well as a new washer and dryer. With the house continuing to operate at full capacity of 14 men, the kitchen has seen

better days. After securing some funding, we hope to complete updates that will help our men to continue preparing healthy and delicious home-cooked meals for each other. In addition to the new ramp, we hope to install a handicapped-accessible bathroom in anticipation of serving those who may need it.

Recent accomplishments are plentiful. Two of our men have successfully navigated Monroe County Drug Treatment Court, completing all of their required tasks. Five men have graduated the Nielsen House program and were able to obtain permanent housing through Spiritus Christi in their journey to self-sufficiency. Many of our men are pursuing additional education through programs such as the Professional Driving Institute, Rochester Arc and Flame Center and the Urban League of Rochester, to help them obtain careers in the growing sectors of construction, health care, and food service.

All in all, the past few months have been a complete success. The men of Nielsen House have reached new levels of progress and are excited for what is next to come. They have all made significant strides on their paths to recovery. Additionally, our staff is constantly evolving to meet the needs of our men through new training and certifications.

Through the continued support of Spiritus Christi Church and our generous community partners, Nielsen House is determined to continue providing for OUR community and to make 2019 our best year yet.

Wellness will certainly remain an important pillar of success for our men, throughout the entirety of their recovery

A Basement Gym Changed My Life

By Chris Ruiz, Nielsen House Fitness Liaison

I would like give a little insight about my journey and how fitness changed my life. It started in the basement of Nielsen House. I walked into the house weighing 110 pounds, beaten down and malnourished due to my addiction.

I was there for about four weeks before the staff pushed me, giving me the confidence to go in the basement and make working out a part of my daily routine. We had old equipment, but it was just enough to get me going to a place in my mentality I have never been. I was using plastic gloves as workout gloves, and it was kind of dim and dark down there. The atmosphere wasn't very inviting.

Slowly but surely I started feeling good about myself. Within a month, it became routine for me to go downstairs and work out every day after morning meditation. As the staff saw me taking workouts more seriously, they pitched in to buy me gloves and a shaker bottle. They also started buying me healthier things to eat. I was very grateful.

When I began to achieve results, fellow residents started joining me. I noticed that I was onto something. There seemed to be a connection between fitness and helping people stay sober.

As I moved forward with my fitness. I wanted more. I was outgrowing the gym in the Nielsen House basement. I spoke to staff about applying to get a membership at the YMCA, and they gave me the green light. Three weeks later I was approved for a three-month membership to the YMCA. But the cost was 60 bucks, and I didn't have the money. I spoke to the staff members and got a sponsorship from Spiritus Christi. I was very excited.

Fast forward my journey and I became a staff member at Nielsen House. I was still very into fitness, and I wanted to give back to the men of the house what was so freely given to me. I wanted to spruce up the basement and create a vibrant, positive atmosphere. I spoke to the Director, who

spoke to the Executive Director and asked if we could receive some funds to renovate the basement.

They gave me a \$700 budget to make improvements, which I appreciated greatly. Now it was "game on." I reached out to a couple of resources, including RORecovery Fitness, via social media and told them we needed donations of any gym equipment that they could find. About two weeks later I started receiving emails about equipment that people wanted to get rid of, as long as we would pick it up.

Things took off. We cleared the basement, stripped the floor, and painted all the walls. I tried to stay within budget but my vision was big and I truly believe fitness trains you to have discipline, patience, and commitment. Thankfully SCPO stuck behind us and went with the flow. After putting in a proposal for rubber mats, fixing a leak in the ceiling, putting new drywall and other improvements, the outreach probably spent more than \$2,000 on my vision.



SCPO RORecovery Fitness 5K, September 2018.

Three months later we had a fully renovated gym, and I was given the position of fitness liaison.

I still come and help train the men who want to work out on Sundays. We received a grant from Greater Rochester Health Foundation to purchase a brand new treadmill. The treadmill is used often and has become the focus of the exercise room. Justin, one of our alumni, used it to train for two 5K races that Nielsen House



First steps to prepping basement.

participated in—the annual RORecovery Fitness event in September, to shatter the stigma of addiction, and the "Scare Away Brain Cancer" race in October. I believe the in-house gym played a significant role in these activities.

Another idea I proposed was to sponsor Nielsen House men for a membership at the YMCA, if they use the in-house gym and make it part of their routine. This gives an incentive to expand fitness through a wider range of activities, such as swimming, basketball, handball, pickle ball, and more. Leadership said "yes," and that took off too. The men now had something to aim for while building a new healthy habit in their lives.

I thank God for Nielsen House, first for believing in me and then for teaching me to be of selfless service. My journey started almost three years ago, in the basement of the Nielsen House. Now I am a bodybuilder who has joined in a Men's Physique competition with hopes of winning my pro card. After that, I plan to get certified to be a personal trainer. I am a full-time employee at Trillium Health, part-time employee at Nielsen House, and part-time student at MCC. I owe my successes and my drive to that dim basement with basic equipment. It taught me how to take my time, stay consistent, and know that with dedication you will receive results.

I would like to give thanks to Jim Smith, Jon Olsen, Winzell Beckett, Raul Torres and all those who pushed me in the right direction so that I may do the same for others.

Racing to Recovery in 20:33

By Justin B.

Editor's note: Justin, a Nielsen House alum, wrote this reflection after competing in the 11th annual "Scare Brain Cancer Away" 5K race last year.

On Saturday, October 20th, Nielsen House participated in a 5K race in East Rochester to raise funds for fighting brain cancer. Running and fitness were a big part of my life as a child, and I ran varsity cross-country in high school.

During my time at Nielsen House, I have been able to get back to having fitness be a part of my life. It is something I lost during my active addiction. But, with gym equipment and a treadmill in the basement, it has started to be important again

Not only is exercise good for our physical health, it is also extremely beneficial for moving forward with recovery from addiction and improving mental health. This is something that has been proven by science, and something I believe every one of us should incorporate into our programs.

As a result of my ability to work out and train for the race, I was able to complete the 5K in 20:33. I finished 30th out of about 1,400 participants in the race, and medaled in my age group.

I would welcome any further programming or ideas that would encourage fitness here at the house. It certainly has benefited me, and I believe it could benefit all of us in recovery.



Gratitude for Grants:

The Prison Outreach is grateful for the following gifts received or awarded since publication of the Fall/Winter 2018 newsletter:

Public

City of Rochester

Emergency Food and Shelter
National Board Program

Finger Lakes Performing Provider System

Monroe County

New York State Office of Temporary
and Disability Assistance

U.S. Department of Housing
and Urban Development

Private

Hubertus and Helmi Behrla Toy Fund

Greater Rochester Health Foundation

Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation

Helen L. Morris Supporting Foundation

Laura J. Niles Foundation

Guido and Ellen Palma Foundation

Raymour & Flanigan (In-kind)

Rochester Female Charitable Society

Rochester Women's Giving Circle

United Way of Greater Rochester
Donor Designation Program

Wilson Foundation

Women's Foundation of Genesee Valley



Please Join Our List of Sponsors for the April Gala

Sponsorships are still available at \$2,000, \$1,000 and \$500 levels. Please consider whether you, your company or other groups with which you are involved, might be willing to support this valuable ministry in return for valuable goodwill and publicity. Sponsors will be acknowledged at the event. Event tickets are included—call Sharon Castronovo at 288-0504 for details.



Thank you to our current 2019 Gala sponsors



Jim and Pat Dillon

Jean Hawkes

Home Leasing

Maplewood Nursing Home

Al and Betty Monahan

PH Pool and Spa Service

Rainaldi Brothers, Inc.

Jim and Julie Smith

United Way



If your employer participates in the United Way Donor Designation Program, you can direct your United Way contribution to the Prison Outreach by writing in the agency ID #1384 on your pledge form. Just ask your Human Resources or Payroll department for a pledge form, or call the SCPO office at 288-0504 to request a donor designation card.

SPIRITUS CHRISTI PRISON OUTREACH STRATEGIC PLAN

OUR MISSION

To visit women and men who are incarcerated and journey with them as they enter the community

OUR VISION

The Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach is the lead agency serving the homeless ex-offender in the Monroe County area

OUR STRATEGY

1

Visitation to support men and women in jail or prison

2

Safe housing from highly supervised temporary homes to permanent housing

3

Case management to coordinate the treatment and services our residents need to live independently

4

Employment planning by providing access to the education, training and support they need to get good jobs

OUR GOALS FOR 2015-2019

Expand independent living options

Increase employment planning tools

Improve programming to teach life skills and support family reunification

Achieve financial sustainability for our mission

Changing Roles on the Board

By Kathleen Tranelli



Jean Hawkes



Velma Campbell

We welcome Board member Velma Campbell as interim Advisory Board Chair. Velma is a retired social worker and former Adjunct Professor of Social Work for the Greater Rochester Collaborative (a partnership of Nazareth College and SUNY College at Brockport). She has demonstrated a deep commitment to the programs of both Nielsen House and Jennifer House for over 8 years as a volunteer and Board member, leveraging her community connections and knowledge of social services in Rochester. We're extremely grateful to Velma for taking on this additional role.

We thank Jean Hawkes for her service as Advisory Board Chair. Jean is leaving the Board but will continue in her role as grant writer extraordinaire. Jean served as Vice President for Development and Marketing at Lakeside Health System before retiring to work on fundraising projects as a freelance professional. She has helped SCPO to dramatically increase fundraising from private foundations and donors for over 5 years, and to develop sound strategies for fund-raising. Her passion for the work of SCPO is evident in her compelling grant applications.



SCPO Wish List

Jennifer House



- New pots and pans
- Printer/copier for PC
- Camera
- Book shelf
- Recovery movies (DVD)
- Daily planners
- Journals, pens, pencils
- Purses/shoes
- Pajamas/robes/slippers
- Umbrellas
- Pillows/pillow cases
- Comforters and sheet sets (twin size)
- Towels (body and face)
- Women's socks, panties and bras
- Women's toiletries
- Walmart/Wegmans Gift Cards
(for food & gifts for women)

Nielsen House



- Hygiene supplies
- Towels
- Blankets
- Kitchen appliances
- Twin beds
- Furniture for residents' new apartments
- Notebooks / planners
- Men's clothing / shoes
- Love and prayers

Items can be dropped off at the houses or at the Spiritus Christi Offices, 121 N. Fitzhugh St. For more information call Jennifer House at 288-1074 or Nielsen House at 328-0801. Thank you!

SCPO Board of Advisors

Velma B. Campbell	Retired Social Worker
Sharon Castronovo	Grants/Office Manager, Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach
Megan Houppert	Development Manager, Home Leasing Corporation
John Klatté	Vice President, Northwest Bank
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Nelson Leenhouts [Emeritus]	Chairman & CEO, Home Leasing Corporation
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We have enabled online donations through PayPal or credit card, on a new website.

Please visit:

<http://spirituschristiprisonoutreach.org/>
and click the "Contribute" tab at top.



Check out:

www.facebook.com/SpiritusChristiPrisonOutreach
where you can find links to recent media coverage
and favorite reflections of residents and staff.



Want A Speaker?

Are you looking for a speaker for your club, or community group?

Do you know of another church or community group who might want to learn about the Prison Outreach or support its work?

We have dynamic speakers who are anxious to tell the community about the great work the Outreach is doing to help ex-offenders transform their lives. The stories are compelling and the reduced recidivism statistics are impressive.

All we need is a name and contact information; we'll handle the rest. Contact Jim Smith at 288-0504 for details or to schedule a speaker.